

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claim 1 (original) A method for authenticating a digital signature key, the method comprising:

- (a) preparing a record including an integrated combination of (1) indicia uniquely corresponding to the key, and (2) indicia of a covenant not to repudiate any digital signature made with the key except under specified conditions; and
- (b) having an owner of the key perform a legally accepted execution of the record;
- (c) whereby the owner enters into a covenant with any bearer of the record not to repudiate any digital signature made with the key except under the specified conditions.

Claim 2 (new) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

- (a) obtaining the executed record at an Internet site; and
- (b) at the Internet site, posting a digitally certified copy of the document for downloading without independently confirming the identity of the owner of the key.

Claim 3 (new) The method of claim 1 wherein the record is a paper document and the indicia uniquely corresponding to the key comprises a fingerprint of the key printed on the document.

Claim 4 (new) The method of claim 3 wherein the fingerprint is a cryptographic hash code printed on the document as hexadecimal digits.

Claim 5 (new) The method of claim 3 wherein:

- (a) the fingerprint is printed as digits in the background of the document; and
- (b) the covenant extends to any bearer of a facsimile copy of the document.

Claim 6 (new) The method of claim 5 wherein the fingerprint is further printed such that the digits are oriented perpendicular to other text of the record.

Claim 7 (new) The method of claim 3 wherein having the owner of the key perform a legally accepted execution of the record comprises having the owner sign the document in ink.

Claim 8 (new) The method of claim 7 wherein:

- (a) the integrated combination of the record further includes indicia of a statement confirming the identity of the owner of the key and that the owner executed the record in the presence of a notary public; and
- (b) the method further comprises having a notary public sign the statement in ink.

Claim 9 (new) The method of claim 8 further comprising:

- (a) receiving the executed document at an Internet site; and

(b) at the Internet site, after confirming that the document bears a notarized ink signature, posting a digitally certified copy of the document for downloading without independently confirming the identity of the owner of the key.

Claim 10 (new) The method of claim 8 wherein the fingerprint is printed as digits in the background of the document.

Claim 11 (new) The method of claim 10 wherein the fingerprint is further printed such that the digits are oriented perpendicular to other text of the record.

Claim 12 (new) The method of claim 1 wherein the covenant:

(a) refers to a private key uniquely corresponding to the digital signature key; and
(b) includes an acknowledgment that failing to keep the private key secure may result in forging of digital signatures made with the digital signature key.

Claim 13 (new) The method of claim 12 wherein:

(a) the record is a paper document and the indicia uniquely corresponding to the key comprises a fingerprint of the key printed as digits in the background of the document; and
(b) having the owner of the key perform a legally accepted execution of the record comprises having the owner sign the document in ink over some of the digits.

Claim 14 (new) A legal instrument made by a process comprising:

- (a) generating a fingerprint uniquely corresponding to a supplied digital signature key; and
- (b) recording in the legal instrument, in an integrated combination, indicia of the fingerprint and a covenant not to repudiate any digital signature made with the key except under specified conditions.

Claim 15 (new) The legal instrument of claim 14 wherein the indicia is printed on a paper document.

Claim 16 (new) The legal instrument of claim 15 wherein the indicia of the fingerprint is printed as digits in the background of the document.

Claim 17 (new) The legal instrument of claim 16 wherein the covenant appears printed over some of the digits and extends to any bearer of a facsimile copy of the document.

Claim 18 (new) The legal instrument of claim 15 further comprising a holographic signature of a person executing the covenant, inked on the document.

Claim 19 (new) The legal instrument of claim 18 wherein the indicia recorded therein further comprises (1) a statement confirming the identity of the person executing the covenant and that the person did so in the presence of a notary public, and (2) a holographic signature of a notary public, inked on the document and executing the statement.

Claim 20 (new) The legal instrument of claim 14 wherein the covenant:

- (a) refers to a private key uniquely corresponding to the digital signature key; and
- (b) includes an acknowledgment that failing to keep the private key secure may result in forging of digital signatures made with the digital signature key.

Claim 21 (new) A public key registration method comprising:

- (a) having a first person execute a covenant that legally binds the first person to digital signatures uniquely corresponding to and created with a positively identified public key; and
- (b) having a second person receive the public key and a record containing the covenant;
- (c) wherein the second person relies solely on the covenant for authentication of the public key.

Claim 22 (new) The method of claim 21 wherein the covenant includes an acknowledgment that failing to keep the private key secure may result in forging of digital signatures made with the key.

Claim 23 (new) The method of claim 21 wherein the covenant is printed on a paper document and having the first person execute the covenant comprises having the first person sign the document in ink.

Claim 24 (new) The method of claim 23 further comprising:

- (a) having a third party (1) obtain the document, (2) check whether the document has been signed and notarized in ink and, if so, (3) post a digitally certified copy of the document for downloading;
- (b) wherein the second person receives the record from the third party but relies on the covenant and not the third party for authentication of the public key.

Claim 25 (new) The method of claim 23 wherein the public key is positively identified by a fingerprint of the key that is printed as digits in the background of the document.